



DATCP Offers Buying Tips for Propane

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MADISON – With summer in full swing, winter heating options are the last thing on the mind of most consumers. But energy experts are advising consumers to plan ahead for their propane needs this winter by looking at options now and buying early. To assist Wisconsin consumers, DATCP is offering a new fact sheet explaining propane options, including questions to ask when comparing offers.

“Propane suppliers offer a wide variety of pricing agreements and delivery options, and consumers are more likely to get a better price when they buy early,” said Sandy Chalmers, Administrator of Trade and Consumer Protection. “Research options, ask questions, and get everything in writing.”

The new DATCP fact sheet includes background on common delivery options and pricing structures to help consumers weigh their options when buying propane. It also includes key questions for the consumer to ask, aimed at allowing the consumer to compare contracts. Download the fact sheet from the DATCP website (<http://datcp.wi.gov/Consumer/Factsheets/index.aspx>) or request a copy by mail by calling 1-800-422-7128.

“The propane contract sets the terms of the agreement between a propane marketer and a consumer, so make sure you read and understand the terms of the contract before you sign,” said Chalmers. “Pay special attention to provisions on added fees and surcharges and how credits and refunds will be applied.”

Other tips to consider include:

Pricing agreements. Budget plans, pre-pay plans, and fixed-price plans can offer consumers savings when compared to buying at market price. Knowing your tank size and your typical propane usage can help you get the best price and avoid over- or under-buying. If you use up your contracted amount before the end of the season, you may have to pay the market price for additional propane. If you overbuy, your retail marketer may credit your account for the following year, depending on the terms of your contract.

Delivery arrangements. Some retail marketers offer to deliver propane automatically to refill your tank. Others allow you to monitor your usage and call when you need a delivery. Make sure you know how much advance time your retail marketer needs to schedule a delivery.

Ask about fees and other charges. When you compare between retail marketers, don’t ask only about per-gallon cost. Retail marketers may charge a variety of add-on fees, including trip fees, after-hours delivery charges, weekend fees, partial fills and inspection fees. Those fees can have a major impact on your total out-of-pocket costs.

Get a signed and dated contract and keep copies of receipts for at least a year. No matter what kind of agreement you reach, a written contract sets out the rights and responsibilities of both the buyer and seller. Receipts are handy to have if there is a dispute between you and your propane supplier.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, call the Consumer Information Hotline at 800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov.

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